



Iowa Department of Human Rights

Governor Terry E. Branstad
Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds
San Wong, Director

Division of Community Action Agencies Division of Community Advocacy and Services Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning

Offices of
Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs | Deaf Services | Latino Affairs | Native American Affairs | Persons with Disabilities | Status of African Americans | Status of Women

April 23, 2012

Iowa Legislators
Iowa State Capitol
1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Honorable Legislators,

The State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC) became a statutory network in 2009 within the Iowa Department of Human Rights' section of the Iowa Code under the umbrella of the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development. Iowa Code section 216A.140.8 states: *A state of Iowa youth advisory council is created to provide input to the Governor, general assembly, and state and local policymakers on youth issues. The purpose of the youth advisory council is to foster communication among a group of engaged youth and the Governor, general assembly, and state and local policymakers regarding programs, policies, and practices affecting youth and families; and to advocate for youth on important issues affecting youth.*

After researching bills with the potential to impact the youth of our state and voting on positions proposed by our peers, the members of the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council are pleased to announce our endorsement of the following legislation components:

SF 2284 DIVISION XIII/ HF 2380 DIVISION VIII **CLASS SHARING AGREEMENTS**

Giving Iowa's high school students access to courses taught by university and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) professionals would be very beneficial. These courses would be of great value in the preparation of our high school students for challenging college courses in science, mathematics, and engineering. These courses would also give highly valued college credit before the students begin their postsecondary studies.

SF 2284 DIVISION V/HF 2380 DIVISION V **ONLINE LEARNING**

Increasing online learning opportunities would enable youth from all over the state to be able to take a wider range of courses. This program could also help schools throughout the state, both rural and urban, to offer the same beneficial education opportunities to their students.

HF 2380 DIVISION X

ASSESSMENTS – Sec. 39 section 256.7, subsection 26, paragraph d.

SIYAC is in support of the implementation of high school end-of-course exams because of the increased accountability and higher standards that would come with their implementation. End-of-course exams would create a learning environment within each school in Iowa that would create a system of accountability that would require the teachers to teach all of the material that

they are supposed to. At the same time, end-of-course exams would still allow teachers to teach in their specific styles or level of creativity while also allowing them to teach all of their students all of the material that is expected to be taught within the course. Overall, end-of-course exams would make sure that all students in Iowa are receiving instruction in all required areas within each class or subject to a degree that will result in the improvement of the overall standards of an education received within Iowa.

HF 2380 DIVISION X

ASSESSMENTS – Sec. 44 section 280.18 Assessment requirements.

This legislation would enable all Iowa students to take a test that is designed to determine college readiness instead of the ITEDs, which isn't a factor in determining acceptance into college or the amount of scholarship money a student is offered. This would also include giving students the option to take a career readiness exam that would be covered by the state. The scores from these tests would give students a valuable measure to help them in the postsecondary education decision-making process and entering into today's workforce.

SF 2284 DIVISION X/HF 2380 DIVISION XIV

EARLY CHILDHOOD LITERACY/THIRD GRADE LITERACY

SIYAC is in support of setting the benchmark for literacy requirements for three reasons. First is appropriate to set firm cutoffs to proliferate an effective and efficient education system in the state of Iowa. Across the world the finest education systems act in a similar fashion, and this is a just course of action for the great state of Iowa to follow in their footsteps. The third grade is the correct time for a student to finish learning to read and move on with their education. The phrase that has been coined, third grade is the time when a student no longer learns to read but reads to learn, and SIYAC is in line with this statement. Second, definitive research backs this position. Research from the American Educational Research Association and various other higher learning institutions indicates that the "third grade is a kind of pivot point" and that a third grader who fails to read by the end of this school year is much less likely to graduate. Finally, the plan to implement literacy requirements is an inclusive plan that allows for disadvantaged, disabled, and students with similar reasons to work around and still move on to the fourth grade with their peers. Before the decision is made to hold a student back because of a significant reading deficiency, it would be prudent for educators to provide the student with relevant enrichment opportunities. Such reading enrichment opportunities could take place over the summer.

PARENT LIAISON PILOT PROGRAM

Parent liaisons would help to foster a cohesive and effective relationship between parents, community members, teachers, and administrators that would work in favor of students. Schools cannot be world-class without parent, teacher, and community support and investment. Parent liaisons would help enforce this vital element of parent involvement for schools.

You can contact the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council via email at SIYAC@iowa.gov.

Respectfully,

Khayree Fitten, Executive Chair
Mt. Pleasant, Mt. Pleasant High School

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Carlisle, Carlisle High School

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Boone, Boone High School

Jacob Mayer, Violence Awareness Committee Chair
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Jessa Marfal
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Cedar Rapids, George Washington High School

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The State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council

